

Hiring Strategy

School turnover nationally ranges somewhere in the area of 8-10 percent. Younger teachers tend to return to graduate school or to begin families. Most often, according to data collected by Jim Pugh shows that most teachers leave positions for “personal reasons.” Sometimes the reasons are negative—there are some teachers—even great ones—for whom a particular school is not a good match. However, even when departures are all attributable to “time of life” reasons, a percentage change in excess of 15-20 percent can cause concern for faculty and parents.

1. **Consider each position opening a significant opportunity** for school improvement. Each new hire should bring a level of “added value” that will make the school better.
2. **Form a hiring committee.** The team should include Education Director and US/LS Head; it may also include a team member, a mentor master teacher and in the upper grades, a student. The hiring committee should begin the process by:
3. **Analyze characteristics of our school and teachers who thrive in our environment:**
 - What are the key values of the school?
 - What does the school most want to accomplish in the next 5-10 years?
 - What is unique about the school?
 - What are the rewards of teaching at the school?
 - What are some of the challenges?
 - What are some common characteristics of people who have thrived and grown in this school community?
 - What are the common characteristics of people who have not been a good match?
4. **Develop a rough list of institutional needs**—these may be needs that are not based on specific aspects of job descriptions—youth, humor, diversity, intellectualism.
 - What does the school community need overall, in terms of: pedagogical expertise, content-area expertise, student service outside the classroom, faculty leadership, gender, age or cultural balance or diversity?
 - What are some other areas of program and culture that could use some development in ways that “new blood” might make possible?
 - What interesting ideas have surfaced that might be helped along by some new expertise or enthusiasm?
5. **Prepare a small brochure** extolling the benefits of teaching at the school that can be given out freely or sent in acknowledgement of inquiries. Provide useful information about the school and community.

6. **Develop a concise job description** that outlines the basic aspects of the position. State in general terms, note specific requirements (familiar with inquiry based learning, Reggio approach). Include a salary range or salary commensurate with experience.
7. **Advertise the position**, beginning with internal postings:
 - Tack position up on faculty bulletin board.
 - Post on the school's employment website.
 - Pass on to a favorite placement agency or two.
 - Send copy of first display ad to a local or national publication, if the position is significant.
 - Send display ad and "employment at" brochure to placement offices of a group of colleges and university with which we have had some success.
 - Designate an individual to post openings on the employment listing page of a few familiar online sources: PNAIS, NAIS www.nais.org, the Klingenstein Center at Teacher College, *About.com.*, national associations of subject matters (NCTE, NCTM) or age level educators (NAREA, NAEC), Independent School Educator's list (ISED-L), middle school educators (MIDDLE-L), job fairs or employment fairs.
8. **The Administrative Assistant and ED will establish be "hiring central" and will manage the paperwork flow.** The AA will establish a tracking log listing each applicant's name, date of receipt of materials, coded areas of interest. Code how the applicant came across the opening. Each step checked off as process i.e. phone interview. Ask all applicants to send a resume and to complete an employment application.
9. **Send a postcard thanking the applicant for his or her interest** and stating that materials will be held on file while the school's needs are being assessed. The school may contact them at a later date. Include a copy of the "employment at" brochure."
10. **Initial contact interviews—phone interviews or brief face to face interviews.** Develop data about prospective teachers that allows the comparison of apples to apples. The hiring team or the ED can develop these questions. This person should maintain ongoing contact with the candidate through the process—s/he should keep the candidate informed and feeling positive about the school and its process.
11. **On-campus interview.** Interviewers should discuss interview procedures in advance and be aware of questions and topics that cannot be addressed; they should also read resumes and applications carefully. Hiring team will discuss strengths, weaknesses and further thoughts—and make recommendations.
12. **Schedule a classroom visit;** ask candidate to prepare a sample lesson to be taught in the actual classroom in which the teacher is working.

13. **Conduct reference checks by phone**—include inquiries about punctuality, length of employment, in what capacity, reliability, observed effectiveness and reasons for departure.
14. **Offer a letter of intent or a provisional contract:** criminal background check, academic credentials.
15. **Finalists who are not offered jobs should be treated to personal communication.** The contact person should thank the candidate, explain that the decision has been made to take the search in a different direction, comment positively on some aspect of the candidate. Wish him/her good luck, cut the cord cleanly—personal, direct, humane.
16. **Anticipate early departures by early winter.**
17. **Maintain an employment webpage.** Keep a small reserve of interesting candidates even when no specific need exists.
18. **Track the reasons for departure over time.** Conduct anonymous, open ended exit interview with all departing employees; consider engaging consulting help in this area. If that is not possible exit interview should be conducted by someone outside the academic administrative structure i.e. Admissions Director. Questions focus on questions related to employee quality of life: What did the teacher find satisfying or rewarding about working at the school? Did the teacher feel supported in the community? Have there been special factors of a positive or negative nature in the teacher's experience?
19. **Develop a consistent strategy for announcing teacher departures and for honoring departing teachers.**